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THE MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

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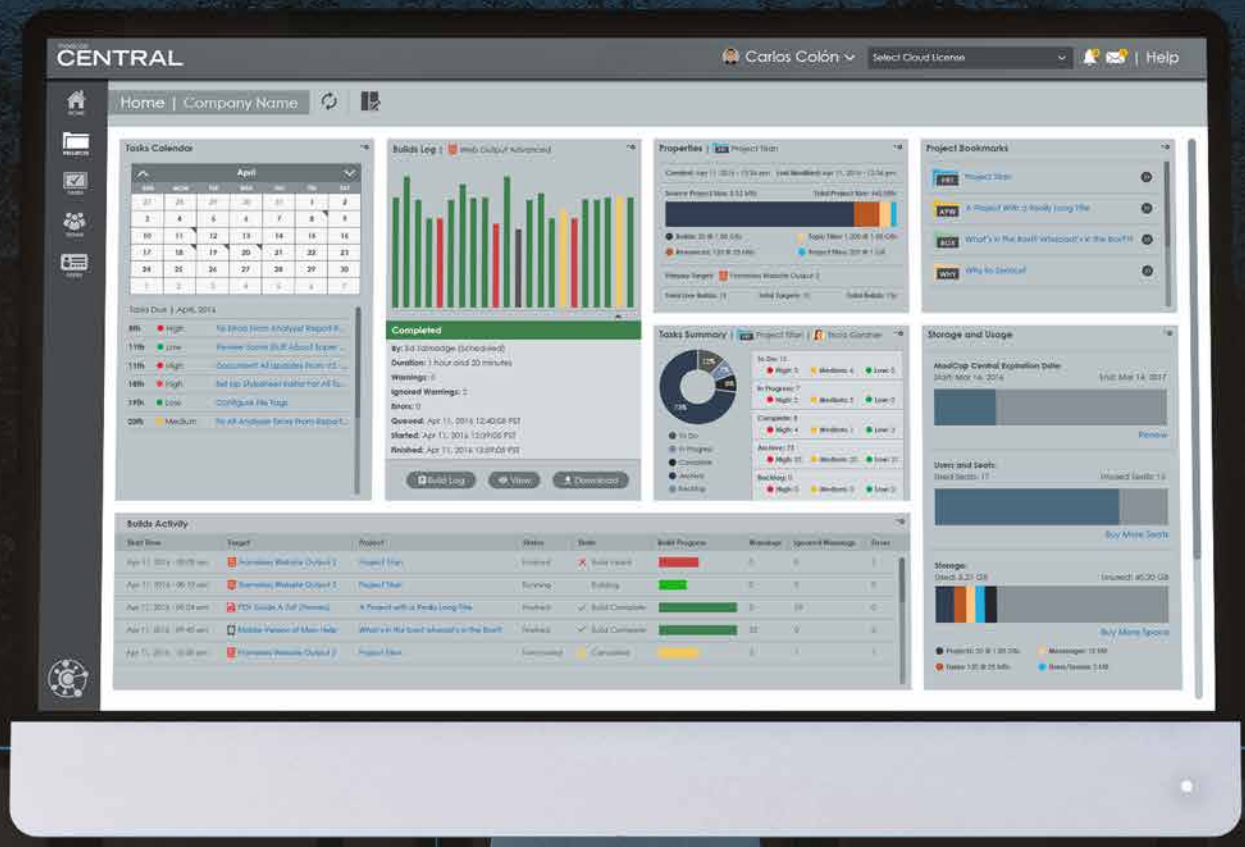

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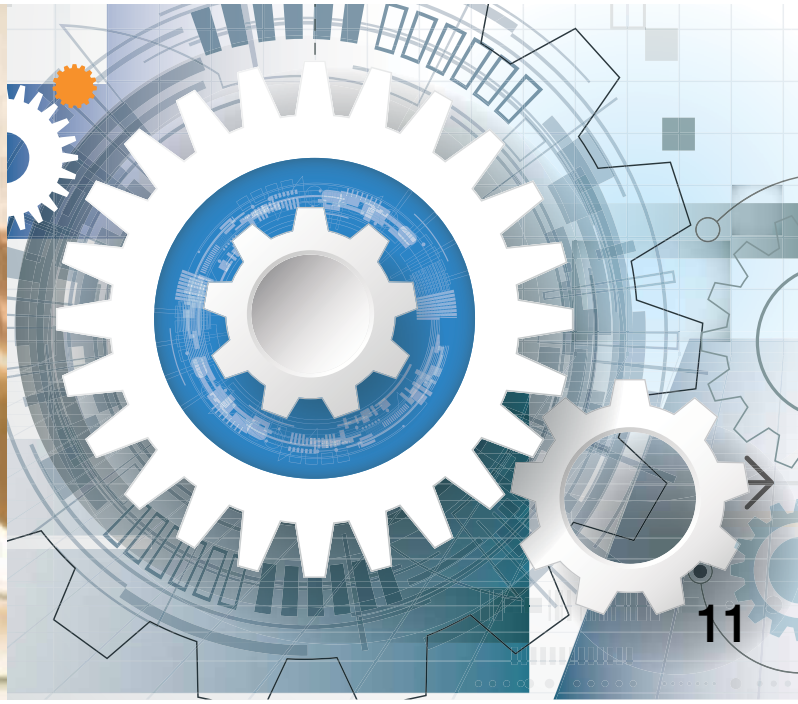

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A Note from the Editor

MARCH *INTERCOM* IS focused on core competencies in technical communication, and thus it made sense to me to ask several of the CPTC accredited trainers to submit articles on the nine core skill areas of technical communication, per STC's Certification Program. The nine areas are project planning, project analysis, content development, organizational design, written communication, visual communication, reviewing and editing, content management, and production and delivery.

These nine core areas were built from a job task analysis (JTA) survey of STC members and professionals in technical communication and from the results of a comprehensive TC BOK content review. The survey asked participants to rank the importance of knowledge, skills, and abilities related to process management, researching, design, development, review, and production. It also focused on tasks, importance, and frequencies related to their job responsibilities and knowledge of the profession.

The Foundation Professional Certification is built on Bloom's Taxonomy and focuses on knowledge of the field. To achieve the Certified Professional Technical Communicator Foundation designation, applicants must demonstrate knowledge and understanding of best practices in technical communication by passing an exam based on a body of knowledge. The authors of the articles in this issue of *Intercom* know these nine areas as well as anyone involved with the program, as they have all passed the exam, are CPTC certified, and have been accredited to teach training courses on the subject matter.

The textbook STC selected for the CPTC Foundation exam body of knowledge is Richard Johnson-Sheehan's *Technical Communication Today*, 5th edition. The authors have cited important references to the textbook for each of the nine competency areas. If you're interested in becoming Foundation Certified through STC's CPTC program, this issue of *Intercom* will be useful to you in studying for the exam. And even if you're not planning to become certified, the articles detail the foundational skills every technical communicator should possess.

Besides the Chief Examiner for the program (Craig Baehr), the authors in this issue are all APMG International accredited individual trainers authorized to teach Foundation CPTC courses. Please visit the trainers' websites, listed at the end of each article, to contact them directly and/or to register for or request an individual training course for your organization.

This issue of *Intercom* also contains a mid-term report by 2016–2017 President Adriane Hunt, information about STC's annual awards and honorees to be presented at the 2017 Summit, and details for attendees on the Summit's Closing General Session and the Washington, DC area.

As always, send your *Intercom* feedback or comments to *intercom@stc.org*.

—Liz Pohland
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Laying the Groundwork: Project Planning and Project Analysis

By CHRIS HESTER | *STC Fellow*

THE CPTC FOUNDATION level focuses on knowledge of the field as represented by nine key competency areas. The first two competency areas, Project Planning and Project Analysis, lay the groundwork for what is a long-established goal in technical communication: deliver the right information to the right people in the right format at the right time.

Project Planning

Project Planning focuses on the work involved to plan and manage not only the documents, but also the work teams involved on the project. This means knowing and understanding how the technical communication lifecycle works. Richard Johnson-Sheehan's text, *Technical Communication Today* (5th ed.), defines five stages in the lifecycle:

- Planning and researching: to define, analyze, and research the rhetorical situation of your project. The rhetorical situation includes the purpose, subject, readers, and context.
- Organizing and drafting: to shape the ideas and content based on the selected genre.
- Improving style: to continually edit and refine the project's style.
- Designing: to provide users with accessible information, effective graphics, and readable layout.
- Revising and editing: to review the document and ensure the readers receive the information they need.

The key to Project Planning is first recognizing that the lifecycle stages are an iterative process, not linear. As the project progresses, we move from one stage to another, but circumstances may require that we revert and perform additional work before continuing. For example, while working on a draft, we may discover additional research is needed. This in turn may require adjusting the project schedule.

These lifecycle stages apply to the different genres within technical communication, from emails and letters, to proposals to user guides and policy manuals. There will always be some degree of "planning, organizing, improving, designing, and revising" on a documentation project, just as there will always be a rhetorical situation for a project.

According to Johnson-Sheehan, this rhetorical situation is critical. The subject defines the scope of the project, while the purpose explains what the project will do. After we have a general idea of the subject and purpose, we can begin strategic planning. Strategic planning involves setting objectives, creating a task list, and developing a timeline. An objective is like the project purpose, but the analysis goes deeper:

- Why are you doing this project?
- Why is the project important?
- What problems is the project expected to solve?

Tasks support the project objectives and map to the stages within the lifecycle. Working backwards from a

deadline, we can assign checkpoints or milestones, and then fill in the project timeline with tasks related to planning and researching, organizing and drafting, and so on.

The Project Planning competency also addresses tracking progress and the importance of activity reports. Progress and status reports are an important communication tool for many teams. And remember when I mentioned that the project lifecycle is iterative? By tracking progress against a project timeline, we collect data and experience that will help us create more accurate project schedules in the future.

Through mastery of the Project Planning competency, technical communicators demonstrate knowledge of:

- The writing process and its relationship to the planning of a team's work.
- The rhetorical situation and how it prepares us for defining our readers.
- Strategic planning in a technical communication context.

Project Analysis

The rhetorical situation and project plan provide a framework or compass by which the team can start working. The Project Analysis competency builds on this information to focus on the reader and develop a reader profile. Why is this important? In technical communication, deliverables are targeted towards specific audiences. A reader profile will tell us about the readers' distinct needs, background, abilities, and experiences and help us understand how readers will use the documents we produce.

The first step in developing the reader profile is to identify the types of readers:

- Primary readers are the action takers, the main audience.
- Secondary readers are the advisors, the people who may already know about the subject and who advise the primary readers (e.g., engineers, lawyers, scientists, etc.).
- Tertiary readers are evaluators and include people who have an interest in the document's information (e.g., auditors, reporters, competitors, etc.).
- Gatekeepers are supervisors who review the document before it is sent to the primary readers.

After identifying the document's readers, we can develop profiles to identify their needs, values, and attitudes. Johnson-Sheehan recommends using a matrix to capture this information.

- Needs: What information do the primary readers need to make a decision? What to the secondary readers need to make a recommendation?
- Values: What do the readers value most? Are you writing for an audience that values profit or one that values efficiency? Do they value accuracy? How much do they value social concerns?
- Attitudes: What are the readers' attitudes towards the subject and the company? Will they embrace the topic or be skeptical?

Context has several components, and again, it is helpful to use a matrix when assessing the readers' context. This assessment goes beyond "where and when" to evaluate:

- Physical: Where will the readers use the document?
- Economic: What money-related issues will restrict the readers' actions?
- Political: Are there micropolitical or macropolitical trends that will influence the readers?
- Ethical: What are the personal, social, or environmental issues that shape the reader's responses?

The matrix approach seems simple, yet it is an effective exercise for brainstorming readers and their characteristics, especially with team members or clients who have never done personas or user analysis before.

Taking the time to identify reader types, assess readers, and develop a reader profiles has its benefits. The profiles can help you decide the most appropriate document type for your project. For example, a quick reference guide may be more appropriate than an instruction manual. Next, information in the profiles can improve your decisions regarding content, organization, style, and design of your documents. And if your documents will be read by a global audience, then reader profiles will help you identify multicultural issues that may affect content, organization, design, and style.

Through mastery of the Project Analysis competency, technical communicators demonstrate knowledge of:

- Reader profiles and the implications of working with global audiences.
- The process and benefits of mapping information needs to an audience.
- The methods for analyzing the different contexts in which readers will use an information product.

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Content Development

By ALAN HOUSER | *STC Fellow*

NEARLY EVERY technical communication project requires research. Technical communicators must define research questions to be addressed. Technical communicators must acquire accurate information, vet information sources, and properly cite sources. Furthermore, technical communicators must develop content in appropriate *genres*—categories or types of documents—according to expected patterns for each genre.

The CPTC Foundation core competency of Content Development covers the tasks, methods, approaches, and practices of:

- Choosing an appropriate technical genre for a rhetorical situation
- Following an appropriate pattern, as expected by the reader, for each technical genre
- Conducting research for content development, particularly:
  - Defining research subjects
  - Formulating research questions
  - Developing a research methodology
  - Identifying appropriate sources
  - Appraising sources and evidence
  - Properly citing sources

Technical Communication Genres

Readers don't like surprises in technical documents. Documents should follow consistent, expected patterns of organization. A reader of an instruction manual expects certain types of information, as does the reader of a proposal or an activity report.

Holders of the CPTC Foundation certification must understand the major technical communication genres and their organizational patterns. Richard Johnson-Sheehan divides technical communication genres into six categories of documents:

- Letters, Memos, and Email
- Technical Descriptions and Specifications—including patents, specifications, field notes, and observations
- Instructions and Documentation—including process specifications, workplace procedures, and protocols
- Proposals
- Activity Reports—including progress reports, white papers and briefings, incident reports, progress reports, and laboratory reports
- Analytical Reports—including research reports, completion reports, recommendation reports, and feasibility reports

Each genre meets a rhetorical purpose, and follows a specific organizational pattern. For example, an analytical report typically includes, in order: Introduction, Methods, Research, and Discussion. You may see the mnemonic *IMRaD* used to refer to this pattern.

The Research Process

Johnson-Sheehan defines the research process as follows:

1. Define the research subject
2. Formulate research questions
3. Develop a research methodology
4. Collect evidence through sources
5. Triangulate your sources—ensure that your supporting evidence includes print, electronic, and empirical sources
6. Take careful notes
7. Appraise your evidence
8. Revise, accept, or abandon your hypothesis

Assessing the Quality of Information Sources

Technical communicators must choose information sources and vet their quality and accuracy. Johnson-Sheehan provides several tips for collecting and assessing information sources. For example:

- Consider whether your sources are reliable, and how they may be biased. All sources of information likely have some bias.
- For scientific sources, check a recent published *literature review*. A literature review traces research on a subject, and is valuable for assessing whether a particular source is timely and aligns with other research of the period.

These and other techniques can help to ensure that your research is based on valid, balanced prior research.

Citing Sources

Properly citing information is a matter of ethics and law. In this age of easy electronic sharing of information, technical communicators must pay special attention to and abide by the laws of copyright and trademark in countries where our information is published.

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ALAN HOUSER *is president of Group Wellesley, Inc., a Pittsburgh, PA-based company that provides authoring, content management, and workflow services to technology-oriented businesses, and training to technical communicators in technologies and best practices. Alan is a distinguished consultant and trainer in the fields of XML technologies, authoring and publishing tools, and technical communication best practices. Alan is an STC Fellow, Past Society President, member of the OASIS DITA Technical Committee and Lightweight DITA Subcommittee, and an authorized CPTC trainer.*

Group Wellesley, Inc. is pleased to provide public, online, and private CPTC Exam Preparation trainings. See www.groupwellesley.com/cptc *for our current schedule, or contact Alan at* arh@groupwellesley.com.

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Johnson-Sheehan, R. 2015. *Technical Communication Today*, 5th ed. Boston: Pearson.

Certified Professional Technical Communicator (CPTC) Study Guide, Society for Technical Communication, see *https://www.stc.org/certification/* for current URL.

Organizational Design

By CRAIG BAEHR | *STC Associate Fellow*

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THE ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN competency focuses on guidelines and techniques for organizing and drafting technical documents. Specifically, it covers organizational patterns and rhetorical moves for introductions and conclusions to technical reports, as well as content organizational strategies for specific technical genres including memos, technical descriptions and specifications, instructional content, proposals, activity or status reports, and analytical reports.

Mastery at the Foundation Level

At the CPTC Foundation level, you should be able to demonstrate basic knowledge and understanding of organizational patterns used in developing a wide range of technical document genres. This includes the ability to recall key terms and facts about the organization and drafting of technical documents. The two learning objectives that support this competency include demonstrating the ability to do the following:

- Discuss how patterns of arrangement can help you organize information logically.
- Explain how to use genres to outline and organize technical documents.

Additionally, candidates should be able to identify the major patterns of arrangement for major content sections and rhetorical moves within technical documents, including the introduction, body, and conclusion sections.

Writing Introductions

Richard Johnson-Sheehan (2015) identifies six opening moves which are commonly used to develop the content for introductions. These include discussing and scoping the subject, purpose, main point, importance, background information, and forecasting. For clarity, introductions should focus on these six moves only, and avoid extraneous information. While these moves can be organized in any order, typically they might be arranged based on any number of reasons, such as user needs, genre conventions, organizational guidelines, or simply for narrative clarity.

- Subject (defining or describing the topic of the document)
- Purpose (the primary purpose or goal of the document)
- Main Point (the main point or major claim the document is trying to make)
- Importance (why the document is important or significant to its users or readers)
- Background Information (important supplemental information users or readers will need to understand or use the document)
- Forecasting (content and/or organizational patterns featured in the document)

Organizational Patterns for Genres

Organizational patterns for the body of a document may depend on the document genre and its content. When organizing these sections, it's also important to consider any organizational conventions or other constraints that

may be unique to the document's subject or purpose. Johnson-Sheehan identifies six categories of document genres which are commonly used in technical communication, although they are not inclusive of every document type you may encounter. These six typical genres include:

1. Letters, Memos, and Email
2. Technical Descriptions and Specifications
3. Instructions and Documentation
4. Proposals
5. Activity Reports
6. Analytical Reports

Each document genre includes its own unique content sections. For example, letters, memos, and email might typically include a brief introduction, several narrative paragraphs, and a brief closing. Technical descriptions might include definitions, examples, lists of regulations, safety warnings, and information graphics that illustrate specific characteristics. Instructional documents might include an overview, list of materials, procedure, warnings, and possible uses. Proposals can include an introduction, followed by a discussion of the problem, plan, qualifications, costs, and benefits. Activity reports typically include summaries, results, future activities, and expenses. And activity reports typically follow the MRAD (methods, results, analysis, discussion) pattern of organization.

Additionally, individual sections or paragraphs typically incorporate common patterns of arrangement to organize main points or ideas. Johnson-Sheehan identifies nine typical patterns that can be used to develop individual content sections or paragraphs, which include the following:

- Cause and effect
- Comparison and contrast
- Better and worse
- Costs and benefits
- If … then
- Either … or
- Chronological order
- Problem/needs/solution
- Example

Many, if not all of these, should be familiar to you from your experiences in basic writing course you took in high school or college and are covered widely. It's important to consider which patterns to use and how to organize them, based on appropriateness for the topic, user, constraints, and conventions for the type of technical document you are writing.

Writing Conclusions

When writing conclusions, it is important to address five specific closing moves, however briefly, to reiterate key points, calls for action, and to provide closure and contact information. Like with writing introductions, the order in which you make these moves might vary depending on various constraints. Johnson-Sheehan identifies the five concluding moves as follows:

- Make an obvious transition (indicate the document is concluding)
- Restate the main point (remind readers of the primary goal or point the document is making)
- Re-emphasize the importance of the document (remind readers why the document is important)
- Look to the future (suggest next steps or actions)
- Thank readers and/or offer contact information (provide succinct thanks and / or point of contact)

Suggested Resources

In addition to the primary text for the CPTC Foundation certification, *Technical Communication Today*, you might visit the STC Technical Communication Body of Knowledge (*http://www.tcbok.org*) and search for keywords used in this article. Additionally, you might find reading books or articles on specific document genres helpful, too, such as a book on writing proposals, instructional documents, and other technical reports. And finally, if you work for an organization with a handbook or guide to writing specific document genres, that might help you understand strategies of how patterns may differ in the organizational development of various technical documents.

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STC Technical Communication Body of Knowledge, *www.tcbok.org*.

Written Communication

By ALAN HOUSER | *STC Fellow*

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I RECENTLY LISTENED to a podcast about jury instructions. These instructions guide the jury in how to properly evaluate testimony and evidence presented during the trial, and how to deliberate to reach a verdict.

Unfortunately, these instructions are often so full of legal jargon and obscure language that jurors find them confusing, not enlightening. Given the importance of the juror's task, some jurisdictions are rewriting jury instructions in plain language. The results have been encouraging.

The podcast highlighted the importance of clear written communication, in audience-appropriate language, to support readers in performing tasks or successfully using products and services. Mastery at the CPTC Foundation level requires knowledge and understanding of concepts and techniques for developing clear, effective written communication, that also meets requirements for global audiences and translations. This article details some of the principles you must know to achieve the CPTC Foundation certification.

Guidelines for Writing Plain Sentences

Clear writing starts with clear, plain sentences. Richard Johnson-Sheehan provides eight guidelines for writing plain sentences. I often use these guidelines myself when writing or editing. You can use these guidelines to untangle opaque writing and turn it into plain, clear prose.

1. Make the subject of the sentence what the sentence is about. Readers should be able to identify the subject of the sentence. Opaque prose often hides the subject in an object or subordinate clause.
2. Use the "Doer" as the subject of the sentence. Would a sports writer ever write "The ball was thrown by her?" The actor should generally be the subject of a sentence.
3. Use a verb to express the action, or what the doer is doing. Action verbs form the basis for clear, direct sentences. Sentences based on forms of *to be* (e.g., *is*, *are*, *were*) are generally more verbose and less clear.
4. Put the subject of the sentence early in the sentence. Don't defer the subject with lengthy subordinate clauses. Clear, direct sentences will put the subject early in the sentence.
5. Eliminate nominalizations. Nominalizations are verbs turned into nouns, and are especially common in business and technical jargon. For example, decontamination (n) vs. decontaminate (v). Nominalizations result in longer sentences, with weaker verbs than equivalent sentences written with the original verb forms.

   Johnson-Sheehan notes that first drafts are often filled with nominalizations, because we tend to think in terms of people, places, and things (all nouns). But on subsequent drafts, pay attention to nominalizations and convert them to action verbs.

6. Eliminate excessive prepositional phrases. By specifying relationships between objects, prepositional phrases are invaluable in technical communication. However, multiple consecutive prepositional phrases quickly turn plain language into confusion.

   Writers often use too many prepositional phrases, especially when writing highly technical material. Untangle your strings of prepositional phrases to turn ambiguous, confusing prose into clear technical communication.
7. Eliminate redundancy in sentences. Can an item be singularly unique? Can a person be unexpectedly surprised? Can a resource be thoroughly depleted?

   In each case, the adverbs *singularly*, *unexpectedly*, or *thoroughly* provide no additional or nuanced meaning over the single adjective. It is sufficient to say that an item is *unique*, a person is *surprised*, and a resource is *depleted*.
8. Write sentences that are "breathing length." How long should a sentence be? A good writer will vary sentence length, although long sentences are more likely to confuse the reader. Johnson-Sheehan recommends that sentences be "breathing length." If you read a sentence out loud, and need to pause to inhale before you finish the sentence, the sentence may be too long.

Effective Writing Techniques for Websites

If you are writing for a website, plain language is especially critical. Websites bring their own challenges over other publishing formats. Websites present enhancements for our readers (navigation, search, linking) and challenges (constrained screen size, scrolling) compared to print. Johnson-Sheehan recommends the following techniques for website writing:

- Keep sentences short. While "breathing length" may be a reasonable guideline for sentences in print publications, sentences on websites should be shorter, on average, than sentences written for print publication.
- Keep paragraphs short. Paragraphs on websites should typically contain only a few sentences, to support readers who scan the website content to find the information they seek.
- Links should reflect titles. When writing links, be sure the text of the link matches the title of the target page.
- Create a consistent tone. The tone, or style, of the website should match the content. An e-commerce website should probably use a persuasive style. A medical website might use a plain style when describing symptoms, but use a persuasive style when encouraging readers to see a doctor.

Website Writing for Global Audiences

Because a website visitor can come from anywhere on the globe, writers for websites must be especially aware of the needs of a multinational audience. Johnson-Sheehan provides several tips for writing for transcultural readers.

- Use common words. Slang and business jargon tend to be cultural and meanings can change quickly. Favor common words with stable definitions.
- Avoid clichés and colloquialisms. Do you think your idea is a home run? Your international readers who are not familiar with baseball may wonder why your idea causes people to run home.
- Avoid cultural icons. Use symbols, particularly symbols that may have a political or religious significance, sparingly and only when necessary.
- Minimize humor. Humor is highly cultural and notoriously difficult to translate. Humor in one culture may not be funny, and may even be offensive, in another culture. Use humor with extreme caution.
- Translate your website. To provide the best possible experience for your international audience members, translate your website into the languages of your target visitors.

Other Components of the Written Communication Core Competency

The CPTC Foundation certification also requires knowledge and understanding of the following additional concepts and techniques for developing clear, effective written communication:

- Writing effective paragraphs
- Types of sentences in paragraphs
- Plain versus persuasive style: characteristics of each; when each is appropriate
- Techniques for writing plain paragraphs
- Techniques for writing in a persuasive style

You can learn more about each of these areas in the *Certified Professional Technical Communicator (CPTC) Study Guide* and the Johnson-Sheehan textbook.

Read Alan's bio on page 10.

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Visual Communication

By JAMIE GILLENWATER | *STC Senior Member*

BEFORE WE READ the first page of a document, we assess the quality based on the visual design. Effective design helps to guide the reader through the document so they may quickly find the information they need.

Designing the document is the fourth phase of technical communication development, after planning and researching, organizing and drafting, and improving the style, but before revising and editing the document.

Using Design Principles

The visual communication core competency includes a variety of methods for designing information to guide your readers. The techniques include balance, alignment, grouping, consistency, and contrast.

Balance

When designing a document, it is important to balance pages. This means that design features should offset each other so that the top is not heavier than the bottom and the left and right are balanced. To design for balance, keep in mind that items on the top of the page weigh more than items on the bottom. Likewise, items on the right are heavier than the left. Color makes objects heavier, as do irregular shapes. Certain design elements weight more than others. For example, a picture is heavier than a block of text.

What techniques can you use to ensure visual balance in your communications? Consider using a grid system for design. This grid should specify the number of columns, headers, footers, and the size of the page. Then you can use this grid to determine the best place for images, graphics, pull-out quotes, and text.

Design Principles in *Technical Communication Today*

- Balance, pages 447–455
- Alignment, pages 455–456
- Grouping, pages 456–461
- Consistency, pages 461–466
- Contrast, pages 466–467

Alignment

Alignment signals visual relationships. For example, vertical alignment signals hierarchy based on the indentation from the margin. Vertical alignment establishes lists and heading levels as they align throughout the document. Horizontal alignment connects objects based on the distance from the top and bottom of the page. This alignment helps establish items as a unit.

To incorporate alignment as a design strategy, consider indenting subheadings and lists. Ensure related elements have the same spacing from the top of a page. For example, the beginning of a technical article should align horizontally with the related image.

Grouping

Our readers naturally associate items that are placed near each other as a unit. Grouping allows us to leverage this tendency by designing information to show relationship.

To effectively group information, use white space to frame items. Headings are an effective technique for signifying a new group of information. Also, consider parallelism in the sentence structure to create consistent wording patterns.

Consistency

Your readers need to know what to expect throughout your documentation. You can meet their needs by consistently designing the information. Consistency means making design choices early in your design process and using the same design choices throughout the entire document, series of documents, or website. Consistency not only makes it easier for your readers to navigate your information, but can also strengthen your brand when used across multiple channels.

To check whether you are creating visually consistent documents, ask yourself a few questions: Do you consistently use the same font, color, and size for headings of the same-level? Do you consistently use the same grid design through your entire document? Do you consistently place elements, such as page numbers, on each page? Do you consistently use the same bulleting and numbering schemes?

Contrast

The goal of contrast is to ensure your readers can quickly identify different elements and where they fall within a document hierarchy. Design your communication so that readers can quickly and easily see the differences in the communication. Then uses those differences consistently throughout your communication.

You can use a variety of methods to add contrast to your documents. The methods include using different colors, shades, highlights, and font sizes. These techniques mean that headings should never be confused for sub-headings. Navigation text shouldn't be confused with body text. And graphic labels shouldn't be confused with standalone quotes.

A word of caution: Do not use too much contrast. Consider using two fonts, often one serif and one sans serif. Choose only a couple of colors to represent your brand, and then use these colors for icons, headings, and other areas of emphasis.

Considering Transcultural Design

Depending on your audience, you might need to create documentation for multiple audiences throughout the world. Richard Johnson-Sheehan defines this as transcultural design. Transcultural design can be divided into culturally deep documents and culturally shallow documents.

Culturally deep documents reflect the culture's language, symbols, and conventions. Culturally shallow documents follow Western design conventions, but make minor adjustments for the target culture, such color, people, symbols, and direction of reading.

If you don't have the budget for culturally deep document design, follow best practices:

- Keep human icons simple.
- Use hand signals carefully.
- Avoid culture-specific icons.
- Avoid religious symbols.
- Avoid animal symbols and mascots.

Selecting Graphics

In addition to the five design principles and transcultural design considerations, you must be able to select and use appropriate graphics to reinforce your text. To do this, follow four guidelines.

A graphic should tell a simple story. Your graphic does not need to convey the entirety of your information, but it should tell a simple story. Can you reader immediately identify that your line graph shows how temperatures have changed over the last century?

A graphic should reinforce the written text, not replace it. Keep in mind that your graphic should never provide the only explanation of the information. The text should detail the information, using the graphics to provide a simple and clear picture.

A graphic should be ethical. You've likely heard Evan Esar's famous quote about statistics: "The only science that enables different experts using the same figures to draw different conclusions." Graphics can be manipulated in a similar fashion. Consider your scales relative to the information you are conveying. Is it reflecting the information ethically?

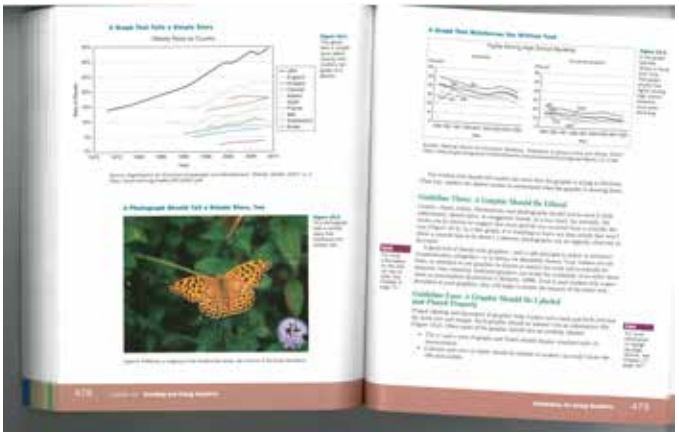

Figure 1. A Graph that Reinforces the Written Text

The Story to be Told	Best Graphic	How Data Are Displayed
"I want to show a trend."	Line graph	Shows how a quantity rises and falls, usually over time
"I want to compare two or more quantities."	Bar chart	Shows comparisons among different items or the same items over time
"I need to present data or facts for analysis and comparison."	Table	Displays data in an organized, easy to access way
"I need to show how a whole is divided into parts."	Pie chart	Shows data as a pie carved into slices
"I need to show how things, people, or steps are linked together."	Flowchart	Illustrates the connections among people, parts, or steps
"I need to show how a project will meet its goals over time."	Gantt chart	Displays a project schedule, highlighting the phases of the work

Figure 2. Choosing the Appropriate Graphic

A graphic should be labeled and placed properly. To ensure your graphic is easy to interpret, you should display units of measurement clearly, label columns and rows or axes, identify important features, and identify the data source for each graphic.

As you select the graphics for your communications, consider the story that needs to be told, along with the type of data you have available for display. Never attempt to manipulate your readers by using misleading graphics. Provide information in a clear and easy-to-interpret graphic to motivate your readers.

Mastering Visual Communication at the Foundation Level

To earn the Foundation-level CPTC, you must be able to recall and recognize important concepts and terms from *Technical Communication Today*. For the visual communication core competency, these concepts and terms include:

- Five principles of visual design
  - Balance
  - Alignment
  - Grouping
  - Consistency
  - Contrast
- Transcultural design
  - Culturally deep considerations
  - Culturally shallow considerations
    - Keep human icons simple.
    - Use hand signals carefully.
    - Avoid culture-specific icons.
    - Avoid religious symbols.
    - Avoid animal symbols and mascots.
- Four guidelines for using graphics in documents
  - A graphic should tell a simple story.
  - A graphic should reinforce the written text, not replace it.
  - A graphic should be ethical.
  - A graphic should be labeled and placed properly.
- Graphic types, including best use
  - Line graph
  - Bar chart
  - Table
  - Pie chart
  - Flowchart
  - Gantt chart
- Design choices
  - Formats
  - Fonts
  - Graphics
- Presentation design

JAMIE GILLENWATER *is a skilled technical communicator with more than a decade of experience in the communications industry. She is an independent consultant with clients in oil and gas, pharmaceutical, and real estate industries. She leads a variety of courses, including business writing for federal employees, training for the Certified Professional Technical Communicator certification exam, and Adobe InDesign courses as well. Jamie is also the Career and Leadership Track Manager for the 2017 STC Summit. She is an incoming member of the STC Nominating Committee. Visit Jamie's website at* www.transcendtext.com.

RESOURCES

For additional study on visual communication, consider the following resources:

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Reviewing and Editing

By KATHERINE (KIT) BROWN-HOEKSTRA | *STC Fellow*

BECAUSE TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION is iterative, the review and editing processes are key steps in maintaining quality control during the content lifecycle. Most content development projects contain at least one review and editing step, and many projects contain all four of the levels of editing mentioned in Chapter 19 of *Technical Communication Today,* 5th edition, by Richard Johnson-Sheehan:

- Revising
- Substantive Editing
- Copyediting
- Proofreading

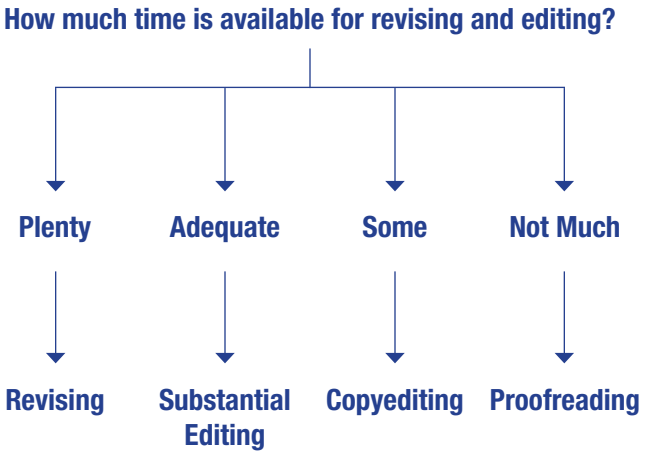

Figure 1. Johnson-Sheehan's Levels of Edit, which are similar to the nine levels of edit published by JPL Labs back in the 1970s and consolidated into five levels in the 1990s, but are more compressed and updated for modern technology.

Content Lifecycle: Reviewing and Editing

Reviewing and editing happen at several points in the content lifecycle. Which level of edit you use depends on the stage of the project, the time you have available, the purpose of the content, and the level of quality needed. For example, you will spend significantly more time and effort on an instruction manual that will be used to calibrate life support systems on the International Space Station than you would on an email to a coworker.

Revising

As you begin to develop the content, you typically review and rewrite it several times before sending it through the formal review and editing process. During this phase, you are checking your assumptions, verifying that you have all the information you need, ensuring that your content model makes sense for the context, audience (called readers in the book), and purpose, and making sure that the scope and subject of the content are at the right level. If you are creating global-ready content, you will also incorporate those principles into your writing and editing.

This task typically happens at the beginning of the process and often does not have a formal procedure associated with it. Instead, each writer develops a process that works for them, within the requirements of the style guide and content model. Early in your career, you might be assigned a mentor who can help you with this process. Once you have a few years of experience, you are typically expected to handle this on your own and to ask for input when you need it.

In addition, some revision will occur as you incorporate comments from each of the other editing levels.

Substantive Editing

Substantive editing is often the first formal review of your content and might involve both subject matter experts and a senior editor on your team. During this step, you are making sure that the content is complete and technically accurate, that the organization supports the purpose and facilitates clear communication, and that the design makes sense for the context and needs of the reader, as well as meeting corporate guidelines. You also often identify graphics that support the content and check that the content fits your content model.

In *Technical Communication Today*, the review process is called document cycling, which is just another way of describing the process of letting others comment on your work before it's released.

Copyediting

Copyediting typically happens once you are happy with the structure and overall content (see Figure 2). With this step, you want to check consistency in headings, graphics, tables, and writing to make sure that the content makes sense at a paragraph and sentence level, and conforms to the style and terminology guidelines. For global-ready content, the editor looks for wording or content that might cause a problem for the localization team.

Some companies use a team editing process for this step, while others employ an editing team. During this step, it's a

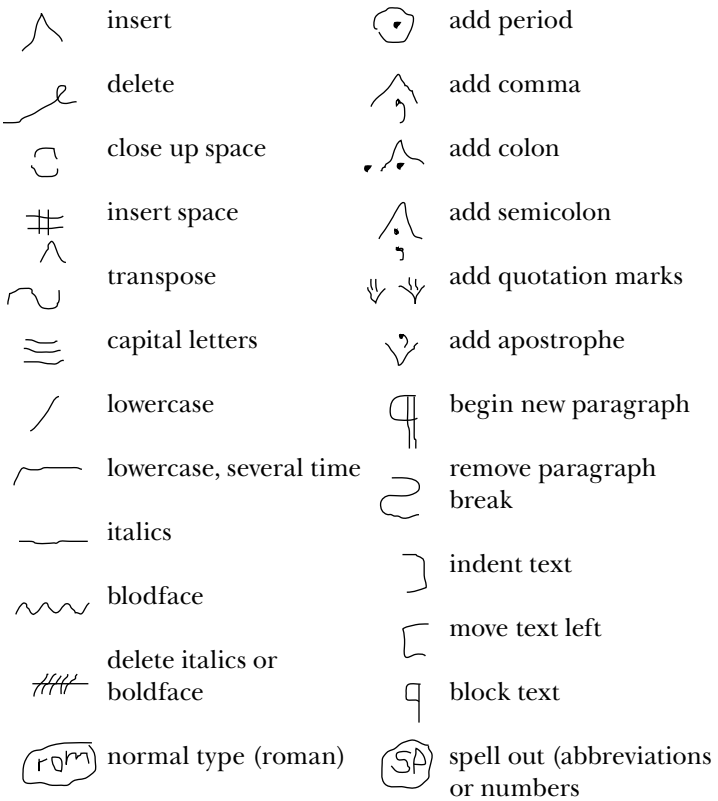

Figure 2. Copyediting symbols

good idea to track changes, so that you can easily revert to the original text and also so that you have a record of the change in case there are questions later. Tracking changes is especially important in regulated industries.

Proofreading

Proofreading is the final check before publication. At this stage, the editor should not be making major changes to the text, but rather looks for grammar, punctuation, spelling, and typographical errors. In some cases, this might also encompass a production edit to verify that the content publishes correctly.

For global-ready content or content that follows a controlled language specification, this step can also include using automated tools that verify that the content follows the strict terminology and grammar guidelines.

Usability Testing

Technical Communication Today touches on usability testing as part of the review and editing process. While usability testing is a discipline in and of itself, it is important for you to understand the basic types of tests:

- **Read-and-locate tests:** Participants must find five to seven pieces of information in your content. Typically, you establish a hypothesis about how long is should take to find the information. Then, you test the participants' ability by videotaping them as they search and timing them. Based on the results, you might re-organize or clarify your content.
- **Understandability tests:** First, you establish your expected results by documenting your content's purpose, main point, and three major pieces of information you expect the reader to retain. Then, the participants read the content, usually under a time limit to simulate actual conditions. After taking away the content, you test the participants' ability to recall what they read.
- **Performance tests:** For these tests, you would create a scenario that requires the participants to use your content in context to perform an action, while you videotape them. Often, participants are asked to talk through their thought processes as they try to perform the task. This test can provide valuable insight not only about the content, but also about the product design.
- **Safety tests:** These tests can be challenging because you can't ethically put participants at risk. The purpose of this type of test is to ensure that the warnings and cautions are adequate and to identify any areas where the participant could have a problem.

While you can conduct usability tests without a lot of special equipment, participants in usability tests should be representative of actual readers or users. Otherwise, your results might not be valid. When moving into a new market internationally, you might want to conduct usability tests to ensure that your product and content meet local expectations.

Mastery at the Foundation Level

At the CPTC-Foundation level, you should be able to name the levels of edit and the types of usability testing described in Chapter 19 of *Technical Communication Today*. You also need to understand why they are important to the content lifecycle and when you would use each one.

One of the challenges that experienced technical communicators have with taking the Foundation exam is that the terminology used in the book doesn't always match the terminology used in the workplace. For the Foundation exam, make sure you understand the book's terminology because that is what is used on the test.

Beyond the Foundation Certification

The specific criteria for the Practitioner and Expert certifications are still being defined. However, the certification process will expect you to demonstrate mastery of best practices for conducting reviews, for editing, and some practical experience with conducting simple usability tests.

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RESOURCES

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Content Management

By BETH AGNEW | *STC Associate Fellow*

IN OUR ROLE as technical communicators, we create, edit, and manage content for a variety of information products. We often work as part of a team, and may be on multiple teams at once if we're working on concurrent projects. At the Foundation level, Content Management focuses on teamwork and using websites to develop and manage information products. Competency in Content Management ensures projects are delivered to specification, on time, and that supporting tools such as websites and social media contain appropriate content.

Teamwork

Whether you're part of a documentation team, or the technical writer assigned to a product development team, it is important to understand the characteristics of teams and how they function. Grouping people together on a team to collaborate, create, produce, and deliver to deadline isn't merely a matter of making sure they attend the same meeting. It requires communication and some strategies for overcoming the inevitable roadblocks.

In 1965, Bruce Tuckman's research into group dynamics yielded a four-stage model of how most teams learn to collaborate: Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing. He added a fifth stage, Adjourning, in 1970, believing that teams need closure before reforming into a new project team.

Forming

At the Forming stage, team members may be meeting each other for the first time. They start learning about each other's strengths and abilities. The team's mood is cautious optimism, and a good first activity is to engage in strategic planning for the project. This preparation phase, in which the project's objectives and outcomes are determined, lays a solid foundation for future work together. The team identifies each member's role and responsibilities so that tasks can be assigned.

Team roles usually allow members to contribute their particular expertise to the group's work. On a team of technical writers, roles could include the co-ordinator who keeps things on track, researchers who gather information, the editor who organizes the document and ensures it adheres to style guidelines, and the designer who handles layout and visuals, including images and charts.

Once roles are identified, the team considers the project calendar and maps anticipated tasks and milestones to the project's timeline to ensure the deliverable is completed on time. Some attention may also be paid to the project's budget if necessary. The project calendar helps everyone on the team know what is due, when, and who is responsible for completing each task.

The project calendar and individual assignments contribute to the work plan, which is the collective vision of the project. A written work plan lets every team member see the same thing: a specific plan for what is to be created, when the tasks will be finished, and who is responsible for each part. Without a concrete work plan, team members may develop very different ideas about what needs to be accomplished.

The final step in the project planning activity is to agree on how conflicts will be resolved. Tuckman pointed out two aspects of conflict on teams—it is normal, and it is inevitable. Determining in advance how divergent opinions will be handled allows the team to keep moving forward, instead of becoming mired in dysfunctional working relationships. Conflict resolution strategies are important for morale and team progress.

Storming

Agreement on how to resolve conflicts occurs just in time for the next stage of team development: Storming. Friction between team members must be overcome through negotiation, compromise, and adapting to each other's work style. People don't always work the same way, and may have different expectations of their teammates. Inevitably, someone always feels they are doing more than their share of the work; people may be competing for resources or recognition, or they have concerns about the work plan or their ideas not being heard.

Using the agreed-upon conflict resolution techniques, the team can foster open discussion, allowing each member to voice their concerns and feel they have been heard. They may vote, come to consensus, or appeal to the supervisor to resolve the issue. When informal conflict resolution fails, mediation can help the team get to common ground. Mediation can be successful when the focus remains on the principles or facts of the problem at hand, and not on the personalities involved.

A selected mediator has each party state their position, and the points of disagreement are identified. Disputes arising from poor communication or minor areas of contention may be resolved quickly just by allowing each side to clarify their ideas for their teammate. When the conflict runs deeper, issues are prioritized, and negotiated one by one, until there is agreement that both sides can accept.

When an individual on a team is not doing their share of the work, and attempts to change this behavior are unsuccessful, removing them from the team may be the only way to keep the team on track.

The Storming stage is difficult for many teams, even when members have worked together before. New projects impose new requirements, but once through the conflict, the team enters the Norming stage.

Norming

Getting past disagreement allows team members to trust each other and settle into their roles. Instead of paying attention to their teammates, they focus on the project's tasks and objectives. Issues that arose during the Storming stage may indicate needed changes to the project plan, and those adjustments can be made along with any reallocation of tasks or revisions to the timeline.

Virtual teams may have had a particularly rough time during the Storming stage, as it is more difficult to resolve conflict with people who are at a physical distance as well as an ideological distance. Geographic and cultural differences also contribute to tension among team members. More attention needs to be paid to communication when working on a virtual team. In addition to the work plan, the virtual team should have a plan for keeping in touch with each other, via email, teleconference, and video conference.

Good communication among members of a virtual team eliminates uncertainty. It builds trust and respect. Set regular times for connecting to talk and bring each other up to date with the project. It is also important to complete tasks on time and deliver what is required. Teammates align quickly with each other and with the project when they are confident that everyone is united and working diligently to achieve the project outcomes. A confident, capable team enters the performing stage when they are comfortable with each other and with their roles on the team.

Performing

A performing team has overcome obstacles and settled into a smoothly-operating rhythm of work, such that they can now focus on quality improvement. They regularly provide constructive feedback to each other, and may have developed metrics to gauge both performance and progression. Team performance reviews also help to improve the quality of the team's work output.

While unexpected events in the project life cycle may force the team back into the Norming or Storming stages, they soon get back to performing effectively together. They have become a productive group. They deliver the project according to plan, and learn from the experience.

Collaboration and teamwork is integral to all assignments carried out by a technical communicator at the Foundation level.

Managing Content on the Web

Beyond knowledge of team dynamics and collaborative processes, Foundation competency in Content Management

includes Web content development and the uses of Web-based tools in work settings.

Increasingly, people are turning to the Web for their communication and information needs. Teams, whether virtual or co-located, collaborate using web-based groupware, wikis, and audio/visual communication sites. Web-based publishing is a huge market, ranging from product descriptions on retail sites to how-to blogs and company profile sites. Everyone feels the need to have a Web "presence."

In the early days of the World Wide Web, developers created Web pages and often contributed the content as well. As the importance of Web-based information grew, companies soon realized that pretty pages that loaded quickly weren't enough to satisfy web visitors. Site usability, navigation, and the correct expression of messages on websites needed the contribution of technical communicators to write and manage that content.

Foundation-level knowledge of websites includes recall of the basic features of a website. The homepage, or main page of the website, identifies the site's subject and purpose. It also forecasts the overall site structure, usually with navigation pages that help readers search for specific keywords, access menus, and find information using a site map.

The site's node pages for different topics or categories of information are accessed by top-level menu links and lead to individual pages containing facts and details. A splash page, which users may encounter before the homepage when they first land on the site, is, well, splashy, with animations or images that entice readers to register to use the site, or access the site in a different language.

Existing in hyperspace as it does, a website can be a vast landscape for a reader to explore. Good website navigation includes consideration of breadth as well as depth of content. As a guideline, a maximum of three links should take readers to the most important information, with it taking no more than five clicks to get to 80% of the site's content. Seven links should be sufficient to provide access to anything the reader wants to find on the site.

Technical communicators are often tasked with setting up and providing content for various workplace websites including social networks, wikis, and blogs. Your responsibilities may also include creating video and podcasts for customer support or as part of a company's marketing efforts. Wikis let multiple users add and modify content, so they are effective tools for keeping documentation up to date. Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter facilitate getting feedback from users but must be carefully managed to maintain the company's reputation. Blogs convey information on a platform that is easy and quick to update.

Generating Ideas

Search engine optimization rewards fresh content with higher rankings on Google and other search engines. Consequently, the demand for Web content that changes frequently imposes a requirement to continually generate ideas. Logical mapping or "mind-mapping," brainstorming, or outlining are good techniques to capture ideas. Freewriting, also known as a "brain dump," lets you get a free flow of ideas down without editing, and is later refined and shaped to suit the message's purpose. Asking the "journalist's questions" of who, what, when, where, why and how can also yield sufficient information or at least topics for further research.

Mastery at the Foundation Level

Competency in all of these tasks and techniques are expected of a Foundation-level technical communicator in the workplace. Many of us do so much more, and those skills and work experiences then contribute toward qualifying for the Practitioner level of CPTC certification.

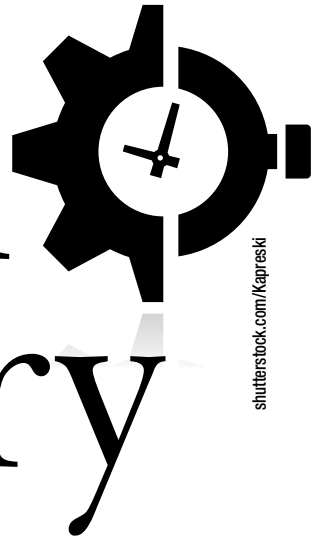
The Foundation exam will require you to recall key terms and facts about content management. With that knowledge, you are well prepared to assist your client or company with creating and managing websites and other work in a collaborative work atmosphere.

Without formal training in technical communication or substantial work experience on your résumé, achieving the CPTC designation demonstrates to an employer that you've met certain professional standards. If you aspire to salaries comparable with other certified professions (such as a Project Management Professional, Professional Engineer, or Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer), the independent endorsement of your skills via CPTC gets you that much closer to being recognized as a vital part of a company's mission and practice.

For someone with a significant history of successful technical communication work, CPTC certification provides personal satisfaction as well as formal recognition of the professional development you have undergone.

BETH AGNEW *is an accredited trainer and one of the first to achieve CPTC certification, which she continues to hold at the Expert level. She is a professor, and co-ordinates the post-graduate Technical Communication program at Seneca College in Toronto, Canada. Beth is an STC Associate Fellow. Seneca College is a CPTC accredited training organization, providing Foundation training to graduates and working professionals. For information on upcoming courses, see* http://senecatechcomm.com/certification.

Production and Delivery



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By BETH AGNEW | *STC Associate Fellow*

THE CULMINATION OF our work as technical communicators is to produce and deliver information products that meet business goals. While those activities occur at the end of the project life cycle, initial work is done at the beginning to determine the outcomes and deliverables for the project. What are we creating? Why are we doing it? How will we know when we're done? How will we know we've succeeded? On a project, you need more than good intentions and an idea of where you'll end up.

Explorer Christopher Columbus had some good intentions. At the start of his voyage, he thought he'd get to India. For a fellow who didn't know where he was going, didn't know how to get there, and didn't know where he was when he arrived, he came up with a decent deliverable by landing in North America. Attaining the business goal of a trade route to India, however, completely missed the mark. His chances of success would have been much better with some specific objectives, mapped to project activities that would produce expected deliverables.

Part of our value to a company or client is to think things through to conclusion. That means ensuring the documentation or services we provide match the intended outcomes that were identified at the beginning. Stated outcomes are targets for all your work on a project. They inform the processes of technical communication, and help you focus on activities that contribute to the deliverables.

Achieving Outcomes

Working toward specified outcomes provides a predictable pathway to completion. In a business climate that celebrates lean, agile, and efficient resource management, knowing precisely what to do to meet an outcome keeps you on track and reduces wasted effort.

When concrete results are expected from your work, your deliverables become visible and measurable—much easier for teammates to understand, and your clients to value. Precise objectives are more easily articulated and shared, especially when you are collaborating with subject matter experts or determining end users' needs.

Outcomes also help you show progress during the life of the project. They provide ways to measure the effectiveness of the work you're doing, including time and budget projections, identification of quality targets, and estimates for use of resources.

For example, a business goal may be to "reduce technical support calls by 20% over the next 6 months." The technical communicator's responsibilities on this project could include improved documentation, improved usability on the product(s) in question, and additional content for the company's support website. Project outcomes could be an updated user guide, a completed interface review, and an FAQ for the website. Those three deliverables are then tools the company can use to achieve the business goal.

When the work products are complete, deliverables are assessed against the outcomes. Any diversions from the original plan can be analyzed and understood, with knowledge captured for future quality improvement. The lessons learned become either best practices or cautionary tales for subsequent projects.

Mastery at the Foundation level

By affirming your knowledge of production and delivery through Foundation certification, you ensure what you've produced serves the needs of your users and your company.

Read Beth's bio on page 25.

REFERENCES

Johnson-Sheehan, R. 2015. *Technical Communication Today*, 5th ed. Boston: Pearson.

Certified Professional Technical Communicator (CPTC) Study Guide, Society for Technical Communication, see *https://www.stc.org/certification/* for current URL.

President's Report

BY ADRIANE HUNT | *STC 2016–2017 President*

THE PAST YEAR has flown by! As the STC staff, board, and conference committee prepare for the 2017 Summit at the Gaylord Resort in National Harbor, MD, I'd like to reflect on STC happenings during the year.

After several years of service to STC, Executive Director Chris Lyons decided to move on to a new career. STC Director of Communications and *Intercom* Editor Liz Pohland stepped up to the board's challenge to take on the role of Interim CEO, while STC Director of Corporate and Member Engagement Stacey O'Donnell also took on additional work as our Interim COO. The CEO Search Committee, led by Vice President Alyssa Fox, went straight to work interviewing many qualified candidates. The committee's final recommendation was Liz Pohland and the board agreed. Liz is now our new CEO and Stacey our COO—both women deserve our sincere thanks for their remarkable efforts and dedication to STC's continued excellence. Congratulations to them both!

Since May 2016, the board met monthly to discuss topics such as the next phase of the Certified Professional Technical Communicator (CPTC) certification program and the work being done by volunteer committees, task forces, and communities. To learn more about the meeting topics and outcomes, look for the board meeting summaries on the STC website at *https://www.stc.org/wiki/governance/board-meeting-summaries/*.

In November, the board and staff met in Virginia for a two-day "big room planning" session. Our goal was to develop a multi-year, forward-looking strategy to ensure that STC continues to serve you and our profession in the fast-paced, always-changing world of technology. Through a card-sorting exercise, the board decided on the following words to embody the true spirit of the Society: **Trusted, High-Quality, Technological, Customer-Focused, Proactive, Progressive**. With these words in mind, the board reviewed every aspect of the Society, its programs, and member benefits, including our publications, education offerings, communities and SIGs, the academic database, Society honors and awards, the certification program, and more. We examined every topic in depth and had candid discussions about what is working, what is not working, and what needs to change. Most importantly, we developed a strategic vision of STC's future including owners, action items, and targeted completion dates for each major focus area to ensure that STC provides you unparalleled value both today and in the future. As I prepare to pass the gavel in May, I know that this board is proud of the work we did together planning a foundation for STC's future, and we look forward to the strategic work continuing as Alyssa Fox becomes our 2017–2018 STC President.

In January, *U.S. News and World Report* released its 2017 Best Job Rankings and included the role of Technical Writer for the first time ever! This press helped put STC in the spotlight and provided our profession some well-deserved attention and recognition.

The CPTC certification program has been running strong, with a three-tiered structure (Foundation, Practitioner, and Expert) to certify technical communicators who want to be recognized in their field as Certified Professional Technical Communicators. The Foundation level of the program has been very successful; the Practitioner level program launch is anticipated within a year, with the Expert level program to follow.

The efforts of the STC staff should not be forgotten! Without their support, every single day, we wouldn't be the Society we are. When you combine staff efforts with the many hours of work done by member volunteers, the result is a strong and growing Society.

Looking ahead, the Summit is in National Harbor, MD, in May this year, close to Washington, DC. The Summit promises to be an educational, fun, and social event with many opportunities to meet and network with other technical communicators and make new friends.

Thank you for supporting our Society and the field of technical communication. The year ahead is promising, and STC is well-prepared for a vibrant future serving you, our members. Thank you for being a part of STC!

Summit Preconference Sessions

STC'S 2017 Technical Communication Summit officially kicks off on 8 May, but why not come in a day early to participate in the many great Preconference Workshops we have scheduled for Sunday, 7 May? Both full- and half-day workshops are available on the hottest topics in technical communication.

Full-Day Workshop

Sunday, 7 May
8:30 AM – 4:30 PM

- Hard Day's Journey into Technical Editing, Linda Oestreich

Half-Day Workshops: Morning

Sunday, 7 May
8:30 AM – Noon

- Programming Language Storytime: Programming Language Literacy for Technical Communicators, Sarah Kiniry
- The 21st Century Technical Communications Manager, Barbara Giammona

Half-Day Workshops: Afternoon

Sunday, 7 May
1:00 – 4:30 PM

- Collaborating and Contributing in GitHub for Tech Comms, Nicky Bleiel
- Revive and Thrive: Strategies for the Introvert in Today's Workplace, Ben Woelk
- The Power of the Question: Developing Analytical Skills for TC Success, Leah Guren
- Modeling the Content Experience: Delivering the Right Content, to the Right Person, in the Right Place, at the Right Time, Andrea Ames

Plus, this year's preconference sessions include a two-day CPTC exam prep class that will look at the requirements for CPTC Foundation Certification and cover the nine core skill areas of technical communication. The class will also address topics included in the certification exam, exam format, and sample questions. Students will be able to sit for the exam at the end of the two-day period. Chris Hester, an accredited CPTC trainer, will teach the class.

Washington's Churches and Gardens

BY CYNTHIA A. LOCKLEY | *STC Fellow*

WASHINGTON, DC, has more museums and exhibition space per square inch than anywhere else in the world. The Nation's capital has more must-see landmarks than any other American city. It is easy to get overwhelmed. While touring the city's museums, memorials, galleries, and other treasures, you'll acquire more historical trivia than you can possibly assimilate. Bring your camera, plenty of digital camera memory cards (or film, if you prefer 35mm cameras), and comfortable walking shoes, but don't try to see it all. Select a few landmarks to linger over or take some tours that give you a broader view of the city's sites.

If you need to slip away during the week to stroll in a beautiful garden, listen to an organ recital, or meditate on the beauty around you, head to one of the aesthetic respites from the modern city—Washington's historic churches and gardens. There are a thousand or more churches in and around the city. Over 20 denominations have chosen Washington as the site of a national church. You'll find a surprising diversity of architecture, art, culture, and music. The following is a small sample of some of the more interesting places.

Just Gardens

National Cathedral Flower Mart

5–6 May 2017. Enjoy the grounds of the cathedral, floral displays, children's activities and musical entertainment.

Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival

Through 7 May 2017, Winchester, VA.

The annual celebration of spring showcases the blooming apple trees in the Shenandoah Valley with more than 45 events, including the Coronation of Queen Shenandoah, parade, band competitions, dances, a carnival, firefighters events, and more.

Georgetown Garden Tour

13 May 2017, 10:00 AM–5:00 PM.
The Georgetown Garden Club sponsors a tour of eight Georgetown gardens.

Inspiring Parks & Gardens in Washington, DC

http://washington.org/DC-focus-on/dcs-parks-and-gardens

There are Bonsai trees, dogwoods, ferns, and a spectacular display of

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U.S. Botanic Gardens with U.S. Capitol in background, Washington, DC.

azaleas in every hue and color on view at the 444 acre **National Arboretum** (Maryland Ave. and M St. NE). The **National Bonsai and Penjing Museum**, on the grounds of the U.S. National Arboretum at 3501 New York Avenue NE, started with China's gift of penjing trees to President Richard M. Nixon in 1972 and Japan's gift of fifty-three bonsai trees and seven viewing stones from the Nippon Bonsai Association to the US National Arboretum in July of 1976 in honor of the American Bicentennial. Many more little trees in pots have been donated by Chinese, Japanese, and North American practitioners. The oldest is a Japanese White Pine (donor: Masaru Yamaki) that has been in training since 1625 and survived the nuclear blast of Hiroshima. The **US Botanic Garden** at the foot of Capitol Hill contains a world-famous collection of orchids that includes 10,000 plants and at least 500 varieties of orchids, 200 of which bloom every week. The **Dumbarton Oaks Gardens** has 10 acres of magnolias, forsythia, Japanese cherries, and crab apples in superb flower. **Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens**, 1550 Anacostia Ave NE, Washington, DC 20019, is a lovely park on the banks of the Anacostia River. The park is divided into three sections: a board walk along the marsh to the river where you can see lots of birds; aquatic gardens with lily ponds, frogs, turtles, herons; and a wooded walk that arcs out to the river.

Hillwood Estate, Museum, and Gardens, 4155 Linnean Avenue NW, Washington, DC, 20008. The former home of Marjorie Merriweather Post has 18th century Russian Imperial and French decorative art and 25 acres of landscaped gardens and natural woodlands. See below for information about the beautiful **Franciscan Monastery and Gardens.**

Lady Bird Johnson Park is a 15-acre island across the Memorial Bridge and off George Washington Parkway on the Virginia side of the Potomac River. It has azaleas, rhododendron, and more than 2,700 dogwoods. Also on the Virginia side, the 88-acre **Theodore Roosevelt Island**, south of the Key Bridge in the Potomac River, is accessible by footbridges. Two and a half miles of foot trails wind through the island and provide good hiking and observation of bird and animal life. **Rock Creek Park** is an 1,800-acre peaceful oasis inside the city. It is one of the oldest and largest parks in the nation. It is four miles long and one mile wide and offers a variety of activities, not to mention beautiful near-virgin forest, black bears, 200 year old tulip beds, and naturalized daffodils.

Just Churches (and some gardens)

All Souls Unitarian Church

16th and Harvard Sts. NW.
www.all-souls.org/

Completed in 1924, the design for this church is a copy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London.

Franciscan Monastery and Gardens

Metro stop: Brookland CUA then walk to 14th and Quincy Sts. NE.
www.myfranciscan.org/monastery/tours/

If you always wanted to see the Roman catacombs, the Grotto of Lourdes, the tomb of the Virgin Mary, the Holy Sepulcher of Christ, and other shrines but couldn't afford the trip to the Holy Land or Rome, you can see them in replica at the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land in America, just up the road from the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. Established as the Holy Land Commissariat of the Franciscan Order of the United States, the 44 acre monastery helps preserve shrines in the Holy Land by raising funds in the United States and by training missionary priests. The spring and summer gardens are beautiful and offer serenity no matter what your faith. Take a contemplative stroll on the Cloister Walk, which is inscribed with Hail Marys in 100 languages, including Apache and Crow.

Islamic Center

2551 Massachusetts Ave. NW. *http://theislamiccenter.com/*

The beautiful Islamic Center on the banks of Rock Creek Park is a cultural and religious center for the estimated 65,000 Islamic population of the Washington, DC. metropolitan

area. The center contains administrative offices, a museum, a gift shop, lecture halls, and a mosque. The faithful are called to prayer five times a day from the top of the mosque's slender 160-foot minaret. The center was constructed between 1949 and 1957 with funds and materials that were donated primarily from the governments of Islamic countries. It is governed by a board composed of the heads of Islamic diplomatic missions in Washington, DC. The decor of the center is a composite of Islamic arts including a Moorish colonnade, horseshoe arches, Turkish tiles, silk Iranian carpets, intricate designs painted on the high walls and ceilings, and a two-ton cast bronze chandelier from Egypt that is inlaid with nickel. Free guided tours take about one hour and must be scheduled a week in advance. Proper attire is required while visiting the mosque: arms, legs, (and women's heads) must be covered, and shoes must be removed. To make a reservation for a tour, call 1-202-332-8343.

Masonic National Monument

West on King Street, Alexandria, VA. *www.gwmemorial.org/*

The Masonic National Memorial to George Washington sits on top of Shuter's Hill in Alexandria. It is the national home of Freemasonry. The temple houses a priceless collection of pictures and relics, including the ivory-handled trowel used by President Washington in laying the cornerstone of the capitol building in 1793.

Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church

1518 M St. NW; Metro stop: Farragut North. *www.metropolitanamec.org/*

This Gothic-style church was completed in 1846 and became one of the most influential black churches in the city. Abolitionist orator Frederick Douglass worshipped there, and Bill Clinton chose it for the setting of his inaugural prayer service.

Mt. Zion United Methodist Church

1334 29th St. NW. *www.umc.org/find-a-church/church/79850*

This is the oldest black church in the city and was a stop on the Underground Railway. The vault in the nearby Old Methodist Burying Ground was used as a hideout for runaway slaves until their passage North could be arranged.

National Cathedral

Take any number 30s bus to the intersection of Massachusetts and Wisconsin Avenues NW. *https://www.cathedral.org*

The National Cathedral, also known as the Washington Cathedral, is officially the Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul. You can see it from miles away rising from Mount St. Albans, and standing as the highest point in Washington. It is the sixth largest cathedral in the world, with flying buttresses, naves, stained glass windows, transepts, and barrel vaults modeled on 14th century Gothic architecture. Completed in 1990, it took 83 years to build and is adorned with fanciful gargoyles and grotesques. Bring your binoculars to find Darth Vader, a camera, and other humorous creatures carved by master masons in the medieval style. If it is raining, go outside and watch the gargoyles spouting rainwater away from the walls and stained glass. Look for the genuine moon rock that is imbedded in a red disk in the Space Window, and don't miss the impressive view of the city and surrounding countryside from the Pilgrim Observation Gallery. The National Cathedral is nominally Episcopalian, but that denomination makes up less than half of those who worship there. Its purpose is to serve all the people. A synagogue meets in the Cathedral, and Methodists, Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and others regularly use it for worship. It is frequently the site of interfaith services at times of national mourning or national celebration, and a wide variety of concerts are held in the cathedral. Over 100 distinguished Americans have tombs in the cathedral, including President Woodrow Wilson, Helen Keller, and her teacher, Anne Sullivan.

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Washington National Cathedral, Washington, DC.

National Presbyterian Church and Center

4125 Nebraska Ave. NW (at the corner of Van Ness St., just east of Ward Circle). *www.nationalpres.org/*

The beautiful sanctuary of the National Presbyterian Church is streamlined modern Gothic architecture with 42 semiabstract stained glass windows.

National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception

Metro stop: Brookland CUA then walk to 4th Street and Michigan Avenue. *www.nationalshrine.com/site/c.osJRKVPBJnH/b.4719297/k.BF65/Home.htm*

The blue-tiled dome of the National Shrine dominates the Northeast Washington skyline. It is the largest Catholic church in the Western Hemisphere and is the 8th largest cathedral in the world. The cathedral is a 20th century combination of Romanesque and Byzantine architecture with a Gothic tower that soars over the Catholic University of America across the street. Construction began in 1920 using marble from 28 countries, brick, granite, tile, and concrete. The shrine was dedicated in 1959 and is the official national tribute to Mary, The Mother of Christ, who was given papal recognition as this country's patroness back in 1846. It has 57 chapels built with funds from ethnic communities from all over the United States. The 5,000 pound Algerian marble altar was built from the donations of thousands of women with the name of Mary. The likeness of Mary is found in a wondrous array of mosaics, stained glass, statues, and paintings.

Nichiren Shoshu Myosenji Temple

310 University Blvd W, Silver Spring, MD, *http://nstmyosenji.org*

Awaken your Buddhist nature. The Myosenji Temple holds regular Introduction to Buddhism meetings. Learn how to chant Nam Myoho Renge Kyo and properly use the Juzu Beads (Buddhist prayer beads).

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Basilica of the National Shrine Catholic Church, Washington, DC.

Russian Orthodox Cathedral of St. John the Baptist

4001 17th St NW, Washington DC. *www.stjohndc.org/en/our-parish/our-history/cathedral-church-st-john-baptist*

The building is executed in the 17th century Muscovite-Yaroslav-style. Gilded onion domes, each crowned with a traditional Russian three-barred cross, a belfry, and icons of scenes from the life of St. John the Baptist above the three doors adorn the exterior. Murals and numerous centuries-old icons and an imposing four-tiered iconostasis make up the interior. Services are available in English and in Church Slavonic, the liturgical language of the Eastern Slav Churches.

Saint Sophia Cathedral

Massachusetts Ave. and 36th St. NW. *www.saintsophiadc.com/*

Saint Sophia is a Greek Orthodox cathedral that is noted for its explosion of Byzantine mosaic work on the interior of its dome. The ongoing project has taken more than 30 years and is supervised by Byzantine scholars from Dumbarton Oaks. The result is the most accurate representation of the Macedonian school of Byzantine art in the world.

Scottish Rite Temple

1733 16th Street NW. *https://scottishrite.org/headquarters/visitors/*

This Masonic shrine, designed by famous architect John Russell Pope, is modeled after the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, one of the "Seven Wonders of the Ancient World." Open for tours from 10:00 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday–Thursday. To schedule a tour, call 1-202-232-3579 or check the official Twitter account (@MasonicMuseum).

St. Andrew Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral

15100 New Hampshire Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20905, *www.standrewuoc.org/*

The parish was founded in 1949, shortly after World War II. Construction of the church began in 1986 in the classical Kozak Baroque style, designed by architect M. Nimtsev. The Chernobyl nuclear disaster of 1986 moved the parish to dedicate the building to those who perished and the victims are commemorated

at every Divine Liturgy. The church building was completed in 1987 and was consecrated on April 24, 1988—a thousand years after Rus'-Ukraine became a Christian State.

St. John's Episcopal Church

Metro stop: McPhearson Square. *https://stjohnsgeorgetown.org/*

Directly across the street from the White House on Lafayette Square, St. John's Episcopal Church is known as the "Church of the Presidents" because every President since Madison has attended a service here at one time. While visiting heads of state always sit on the first row, visiting U.S. Presidents sit on the ninth row in Pew 54 amid the people.

St. Matthew's Cathedral

1725 Rhode Island Avenue NW. *www.stmatthewscathedral.org/*

This Renaissance style church is the seat of Washington's Catholic archbishop. In 1963, it was the site of the funeral mass for President John F. Kennedy.

Saint Nicholas Cathedral (Russian Orthodox)

3500 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, DC. *www.stnicholasdc.org/*

St. Nicholas is the Primatial Cathedral of the Autocephalous (self-governed) Orthodox Church in America. Founded in 1930 as a Russian Church, the building was constructed between 1951 and 1962; it became a Cathedral in 1978. The fresco icons, completed in 1992-94, are expressed in a tradition that originates from the very beginnings of Christianity.

Temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

9900 Stoneybrook Drive, Kensington, MD. *https://www.lds.org/locations/washington-dc-temple-visitors-center?lang=eng*

The striking Mormon temple in suburban Maryland is one of the newest Washington landmarks. This 300-foot monolith, with its six gold-plated spires and blue lights, rises above the Beltway and is especially dazzling at night. It is closed to non-Mormons, but there is a visitors' center that offers a view of the beautiful white-marble temple. The visitors' center shows multimedia presentations, revolving dioramas, and a film about the temple and what takes place inside. The 57 acre grounds have azaleas, dogwoods, and tulips in the spring.

The Diyanet Center of America Mosque

9704 Good Luck Rd, Lanham, MD, *https://diyanetamerica.org/*

The mosque and cultural center opened in April 2016. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan led dignitaries in dedicating the majestic complex, which includes a fellowship hall, traditional-style Turkish houses, and a Turkish bathhouse. The large domed mosque and minaret stand out amid the nearby condominium and apartment complexes.

The Hindu Temple of Metropolitan Washington

10001 Riggs Road, Adelphi, MD, *www.hindutemplemd.org/*

BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir

4320 Ammendale Rd, Beltsville, MD, *www.baps.org/Global-Network/North-America/WashingtonDC.aspx*

Murugan Temple of North America

6300 Princess Garden Pkwy, Lanham, MD, *www.murugantemple.org/*

Sri Siva Vishnu Temple

6905 Cipriano Rd, Lanham, MD, *https://www.ssvt.org/*

U.S. Zen Institute (Chinese Chan Buddhism)

19225 Liberty Mill Road, Germantown, MD, *www.ibcdc.org/temples/uszi.htm*

The initial temple was in an 85-year old wooden church, which burned to the ground in 1992. With faith and generous donations from Buddhists everywhere, a new 10,300 square foot temple was opened on the same site in 2001.

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Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle, Washington, DC.

Washington Ethical Society

7750 16th St. NW. *www.ethicalsociety.org/*

Liberal religious, educational, and community service activities are held at the Ethical Society's Meeting House and Administration Building. It is also the site for many concerts of The Folklore Society of Greater Washington.

Washington Hebrew Congregation

3935 Macomb Street NW. *www.whctemple.org/*

The Washington Hebrew Congregation is the city's largest and oldest Reform synagogue. At the front of the sanctuary, two massive stone tablets separate during services to reveal the ark, which holds the scrolls of the Torah. Like the National Cathedral, other interfaith groups use the synagogue for religious services. Tours are arranged by request: call 1-202-7100.

Other Fun Festivals and Events

DC Funk Parade

6 May 2017. U Street Corridor, Washington, DC. This is a one-of-a-kind street fair, parade, and music festival bringing to life one of the city's liveliest entertainment districts.

Around the World Embassy Tour

6 May 2017, 10:00 AM–4:00 PM. The event showcases embassies from Africa, Asia, Oceania, the Middle East, and the Americas, with artists and artisans, performers, lecturers, teachers, and others.

Passport DC - Open Houses at Washington, DC Embassies

Throughout May. The multicultural event, sponsored by Cultural Tourism DC, features a wide range of performances, talks, and exhibits at DC's foreign embassies.

Virginia Gold Cup

6 May 2017. The Plains, VA. The annual steeplechase in Virginia horse country features horse races, Jack Russell Terrier races, tailgate competitions and more.

Maryland Craft Beer Festival

13 May 2017. Carroll Creek Park, Frederick, MD. More than 25 breweries present over 175 different brews.

DC Dragon Boat Festival

20–21 May 2017. Thompson's Boathouse Center, 2900 Virginia Avenue NW, Washington, DC. Sponsored by the Chinese Women's League of Washington, DC, the event features dragon boat races on the Potomac River, cultural performances and hands-on activities

Fix My App at the Summit Closing General Session

THE SUMMIT'S CLOSING general session will feature a live taping of a brand new UX Web show from the creator of Expose UX called **Fix My App**. Summit attendees will witness first hand—and participate in—the usability testing of a new app. The closing session will be filmed as an episode of Fix My App and will debut later in the year.

Audience members will watch as users attempt to use a startup's new app for the first time during a usability test. It's easy to understand a product after using it a few times, but using it for the first time is when the complications are revealed. After the usability test is complete, a team of user experience experts will collaborate to solve the major problems and advise the app's creators on UX best practices for their app and why the UX problems occurred in the first place.

UX experts include:

- Lorelei Brown—15+ years' UX experience at Verizon, Comcast, AOL, PBS, National Association of Realtors
- Geoffrey Robertson—UX Research Manager at Discovery Communications
- Vera Rhoads—IBM, independent consultant, and 13+ years teaching graduate advanced usability at University of Maryland

The closing general session will also contain remarks from STC's newly installed President, Alyssa Fox.

CYNTHIA LOCKLEY *is an STC Fellow and has been a member of STC since 1979. She has served as the Washington, DC–Baltimore chapter president twice as well as first and second vice president and as the manager of several committees. She is currently a director-at-large for the chapter. She has been the chapter's webmaster since 1994 when she developed the chapter's website for the 1995 Annual Conference. Cynthia was also a founding member of the STC Accessibility SIG and served as their webmaster from 1997 through 2015. She and Karen Mardahl (another founding member of the SIG) maintain the SIG information on an independent website: Accessible Techcomm (*http://accessible-techcomm.org*).*

STC Awards and Honors

ONCE AGAIN, *INTERCOM* is highlighting all individual and community awards and honors in a special section of the same issue. The members, chapters, and SIGS listed on these pages are the best and brightest our Society has to offer. They are at the forefront of promotion our great profession, and we congratulate all of them on their success.

Please watch the STC website in the coming websites for announcements on next year's awards and honors and how you can nominate yourself or a deserving colleague for 2018.

Introducing the New STC Fellows and Associate Fellows

STC IS PLEASED to announce that 11 distinguished members have been named Fellows and Associate Fellows of the Society. They will be recognized at the 2017 STC Summit in Washington, DC.

STC awards the rank of Associate Fellow to Senior Members who have attained distinction in the field of technical communication.

The rank of STC Fellow is conferred upon Associate Fellows who have attained such eminence in the field of technical communication that the Board deems them worthy of being singled out as one of the select few who have distinguished the Society and the profession.

Congratulations to all the honorees, listed below with the preliminary citation. And thank you to both the Fellows Committee, Larry Kunz (Chair), Jackie Damrau, George Hayhoe, and Brenda Huether, and the Associate Fellows Committee, Brian Lindgren (Chair), Lisa Cook, Deanne Levander, Mike Markley, De Murr, Thea Teich, and Carolyn Watt.

Associate Fellows

Stephen Adler
For dedication to the technical communication profession and sustained, outstanding leadership in his local STC community, which have provided great value to those who work with him.

David L. Caruso
For application of content strategy and technical communication best practices in occupational safety and health research, and for dedication and willingness to mentor others at work and in STC.

Joseph M. Humbert
For extensive contributions of technical expertise, combined with creativity and business insight, that for many years have made a positive difference for the East Bay Chapter and technical communication in northern California.

Nancy Larbi
For ease in communicating in international communities in English and French, in-person and remotely, and for dedication to providing the highest standards of technical communication to clients in software technology and international development.

Li-At (Ruttenberg) Rathbun
For continually encouraging and mentoring technical communicators in best practices and professional development, and for ongoing support to STC communities in providing relevant programs to STC members.

Maralee Sautter
For enthusiastically promoting the value of technical communication within local and virtual communities, and personal leadership qualities that inspire the professional community and the next generation of technical communicators.

Roberta (Bobbi) Werner
For dedication to developing STC leaders, enacting continuous improvement processes, flawlessly carrying out new STC initiatives while leading conferences and chapters, and for embodying the spirit of volunteerism as a role model for students.

Ben Woelk
For passionate support and mentoring of STC leaders and members by modeling servant leadership and developing innovative solutions that strengthen STC communities.

Fellows

Mark Lewis
For your tireless devotion, enthusiastically pioneering in content strategy/marketing and DITA; for your knowledge in promoting the profession, and your willingness to work with anyone in the field of technical communication.

Patrick Lufkin
For your more than two decades of STC leadership in the Bay Area chapters and the Management SIG, and especially for your work in support of scholarships and communication competitions.

Linda Roberts
For your tireless advocacy for the profession as an author, teacher, and mentor, and especially for your passion for making products and information about them accessible.

Community Achievement Awards

THE COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS (CAA) program recognizes STC chapters and special interest groups (SIGs) for exceptional accomplishments in meeting Society goals. The awards not only acknowledge that the obligations of a properly functioning community have been met, but that the winning communities have performed well beyond expectations.

The awards program recognizes, in a visible and meaningful manner, communities that demonstrate outstanding, innovative, and sustained performance in advancing the goals of the Society. STC recognizes the following communities for their efforts. Thank you to the committee, Mary Kay Grueneberg (Chair), Steve Adler, Mak Pandit, Mellissa Ruryk, and Jamye Sagan.

Platinum Communities

Carolina Chapter
For your dedicated promotion of the Society and profession through your quality educational programs, strong leadership plan, innovative student outreach activities, varied social events, and annual competition.

Chicago Chapter
For endless promotion of the Society, trailblazing list of programs, active community outreach, and systematic planned leadership transition. For coming up with innovative ideas for education promotion and formulating the Volunteer Incentive Program.

Instructional Design & Learning SIG
For fulfilling the STC mission of providing quality programs to members through innovative activities. For your outstanding work on leadership, transition, and community outreach.

Philadelphia Metro Chapter
For your dedicated focus in reaching out to the future of technical communication via your Academic Outreach program, for your spirit of teamwork in partnering with both STC and non-STC groups to further the profession, and for your work in organizing many social and educational programs, especially your annual CONDUIT conference.

Rochester Chapter
For your exemplary work in recognizing and nurturing volunteer involvement, helping students of all ages learn about the technical communication profession, and collaborating with other STC communities in knowledge sharing, most notably with your Virtual TechComm Showcase meetings.

San Diego Chapter
For providing value to your members and promoting the Society and the profession through your excellent mentoring programs, student outreach activities, education programs, networking events, and innovative "Webinar Mania" program.

Gold Communities

- India Chapter
- Rocky Mountain Chapter

Silver Communities

- Northeast Ohio Chapter
- Southeastern Michigan Chapter

Bronze Communities

- Easy Bay Chapter
- Technical Editing SIG
- Texas Tech University Student Chapter

Jay R. Gould Award

THE JAY R. GOULD Award for Excellence in Teaching Technical Communication honors the distinguished teaching career of professor Gould.

Professor Gould's academic mentorship of technical communication students guided many men and women into the profession. The Jay R. Gould Award for excellence in teaching technical communication honors his distinguished teaching career, which is an outstanding example of long-term commitment, innovation, and excellence in teaching.

This award honors true academic mentorship; a record of successful students, defined as those who are involved in STC, and actively working in the profession; involvement in student activities outside of the classroom; innovation and creativity in teaching; and involvement in research that leads to changes in the way technical communication is taught.

The committee for this year's award is Kirk St.Amant (Chair), Jackie Damrau, Russell Hirst, and Ann Jennings.

This year's winners are:

Madelyn Flammia
The citation reads: For excellence in expanding and advancing international aspects of technical communication education in online and on-site contexts.

Richard Johnson-Sheehan
The citation reads: For dedication to advancing technical communication pedagogy through exceptional research, teaching, and service in the field.

Gregory A. Wickliff
The citation reads: For innovative teaching practices and an exceptional commitment to mentoring students and colleagues.

Congratulations to Madelyn, Richard, and Gregory for this well-deserved honor.

Ken Rainey Award

THE KEN RAINEY Award for Excellence in Research was established by STC in 2006 to celebrate and honor Professor Ken Rainey's passion for research that results in improvements to technical communication, especially to practice. The goal of the award is to encourage quality and excellence in technical communication research by honoring those whose research studies have made an outstanding contribution to the field. The committee for this year's award is Ann Blakeslee (Chair), Michael Albers, Charles Kostelnick, and Hope J. Lafferty.

This year's winner is **Tharon W. Howard**. The citation reads:
For focused and significant contributions in the area of industry research related to usability and user experience; a superior record of carrying out high-impact research in industry and workplace contexts; a well-deserved reputation in the field; and for mentoring and preparing generations of students for the workplace.

Congratulations to Tharon for this well-deserved honor.

Frank R. Smith Award

EACH YEAR, the editor of *Technical Communication* appoints a judging committee to select the outstanding article from the previous year's issues. Judges base their decisions on article content and form. The award honors the memory of Frank R. Smith, during whose 18-year tenure as editor *Technical Communication* became established as the flagship publication of STC and the profession. This year's judging team for the Frank R. Smith competition consisted of Sam Dragga (Chair), Rhyne Armstrong, Leah Guren, Sally Henschel, Richard Mateosian, Melanie Flanders, and Kirk St.Amant.

The judges are pleased to announce that the Frank R. Smith Outstanding Article Award goes to **Charles Kostelnick** for his article, "The Re-Emergence of Emotional Appeals in Interactive Data Visualization" in the 2016 May issue of *Technical Communication*.

The citation reads:

For the author's thorough review of data visualization from historical practice to modern usage, presented in clear language and with effective graphics. The article is not only of educational and historical interest, but also reveals shifts and trends that directly affect both the teaching and practice of our profession.

The judges are also pleased to announce that the Frank R. Smith Distinguished Journal Article award has been awarded to two different articles.

The first goes to **Rebecca Walton**, **Robin E. Mays**, and **Mark Haselkorn** for their article "Enacting Humanitarian Culture: How Technical Communication Facilitates Successful Humanitarian Work" in the 2016 May issue of *Technical Communication*.

The citation reads:
For a compelling reminder of how our work in technical communication can directly help people.

The second goes to **Carlos Evia** and **Michael Priestley** for their article "Structured Authoring without XML: Evaluating Lightweight DITA for Technical Documentation" in the 2016 February issue of *Technical Communication*.

The citation reads:
For lucidly cutting through the jargon and hype and presenting practical alternatives to XML.

Congratulations to the honorees.

Intercom Awards

STC GIVES OUT two awards for the exemplary work published in *Intercom*: the best article of the year and the best guest-edited issue of the year. This year's judging team for the awards consisted of Saul Carliner (Chair), Michelle Despres, Linda Oestreich, Marta Rauch, and Kelly Schrank.

The judges are pleased to announce the winners of the *Intercom* Outstanding Magazine Article Award are co-authors **Jenn Carlos**, **Travis Kelly**, and **Vivianne Costa** for their article, "Measuring Content Like a Marketer: Getting Started with Web Analytics" in the 2016 March issue of *Intercom*.

The citation reads:

For clearly and enthusiastically explaining how to collect quantitative and qualitative data about Web-based content and use it to strengthen future content and persuade stakeholders of the value of technical communication.

The *Intercom* Outstanding Guest Edited Issue goes to **Nicky Bleiel** for her guest-edited 2016 December issue, with a theme of "legends of technical communication."

The citation reads:

Because of the exceptional commitment of the guest editor, this special issue tells the history of the field from well-informed perspectives and, as significantly, creates an emotional connection with these "legends" and our field.

Congratulations to all the honorees.

Distinguished Service Awards

THE SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION has long recognized the importance of the hard work and commitment of its community members. Without their energy and enthusiasm, the Society would cease to be the largest, most effective, and most prestigious organization of technical communicators in the world.

Below are the honorees this year for the Distinguished Chapter Service Awards, Distinguished SIG Service Awards, and Distinguished Service Award for Students. Congratulations to each of them and thank you for your service to the Society. And thank you to the members of the committee, Adam Evans (Chair), Jessica Dougherty, and Mandy Morgan.

Distinguished Chapter Service Awards

In 1988, the Society initiated the Distinguished Chapter Service Award (DCSA) to recognize exemplary dedication to the chapter and its activities. The first awards were presented in 1989. Following is a list of DCSA winners for 2016 with their official citations.

Alberta
Jessie Channey
For outstanding leadership of the Alberta Chapter—for inspiration, enthusiasm, creativity, and dedication.

Chicago Metro
Josee Martens
For your outstanding contributions to the STC Chicago Scholarship and Get Real! Interview programs.

India
Manisha Khurana Sardana
The chapter appreciates your zeal, innovative ideas, leadership and substantial contribution in promoting technical communication in India and providing continuous education support to the technical communication professionals for their career advancement. The chapter looks forward to your continued support, ideas, and leadership.

Northeast Ohio
Lisa Mileusnich
For outstanding leadership of the Northeast Ohio Chapter—for unwavering dedication and service, and for your support and encouragement of strong relationships with local colleges and universities.

Northeast Ohio
Lynn Nickels
For sustained contributions to the Northeast Ohio Chapter, and for your unbridled enthusiasm for educating young people about careers in technical writing and editing.

North Texas Lone Star
Laura Ruggeri
For Laura Ruggeri's unfailing willingness to initiate and wholeheartedly support multiple innovative and successful North Texas Lone Star STC Chapter activities.

Rochester
Carmel Priore-Garlock
For sustained contributions to the Rochester Chapter—for years of effort managing the Ralph P. Kepner Memorial Award and the Heritage Award, helping the chapter extend its reach to area faculty and students, and for enthusiastically supporting and volunteering at chapter activities.

Rochester
Kelly Schrank
For your noteworthy leadership in the Rochester Chapter—for your tremendous work co-chairing the Spectrum Conference, for your responsiveness to chapter members as Program Manager, for your efforts to engage other professional organizations, for your social media and organizational prowess, and for your always enthusiastic support of STC Rochester.

Rocky Mountain
Dave Wilks
In recognition of your exemplary efforts to revitalize the Rocky Mountain Chapter and for your continuing contributions to chapter activities.

Southeastern Michigan
Patricia Gomez Martz
For your exceptional leadership as Southeastern Michigan Chapter President and your encouragement and support as a mentor in our profession.

Southeastern Ontario
James Bousquet
For your dedication to the health of the chapter and your vision of where it can go.

Philadelphia Metro
Karen Levine
For your dedication in serving the Philadelphia Metro Chapter in many capacities over the years, including Secretary, Membership Chair, and competition volunteer.

Philadelphia Metro
Jessie Mallory
For your dedication in serving the Philadelphia Metro Chapter in many capacities over the years, including President, Vice President, Secretary, and competition judge.

Washington, DC–Baltimore
Sean Stevenson
For your outstanding leadership of the Washington, DC–Baltimore Chapter, enthusiastic support of its First Friday Lunch program, and continuing contributions to chapter activities.

Distinguished SIG Service Award

In 2002, the Society initiated a formal awards program to recognize the commitment and hard work of members of its special interest groups (SIGs). The Distinguished SIG Service Award (DSSA) recognizes length of SIG membership, consistency of service over the duration of membership, and variety of service.

Following are the winners of the 2016 Distinguished SIG Service Award and their official citations.

IDL SIG
Crista Mohammed
For your ingenuity and dedication in bringing the "IDeaL: Design for Learning" newsletter back to life in its online incarnation.

Technical Editing SIG
Marcia Wood
For your creativity in designing and implementing our TEAM participation-awards program, your wonderful work welcoming new members to our SIG, and your contributions to Summit 2016.

Distinguished Service Award for Students

The Distinguished Service Award for Students (DSAS) recognizes student members who provide exemplary service to the Society through their dedication to their chapter and its activities.

Following are the winners of the 2016 Distinguished SIG Service Award and their official citations.

Orlando Central Florida
Crystal Brezina
For inspired leadership of the student members of the Orlando Central Florida Chapter and tireless efforts in strengthening the dynamic partnership between our community and the University of Central Florida.

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Career Advice

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BY CINDY CURRIE | *STC Fellow* and
KIT BROWN-HOEKSTRA | *STC Fellow*

Dear TC Manager:
I've gotten passed over twice for a promotion that (on paper at least) I'm highly qualified for. I'm not sure how to approach my manager to find out what I need to do differently. How should I approach this situation?
—Qualified but Overlooked

Dear Qualified but Overlooked: Remember, there is only one *you* and that is your competitive advantage! You got hired into the job you have now because you were the best candidate for the position with your combination of skills, attributes, personality, potential, and a unique blend of values and abilities.

Now take a good at who you really are. Do you feel free to be yourself at work or do you put on an act, pretending to be what you think they want you to be? Does your manager know you want to be promoted? If not, you need to have that conversation about career development and make it clear that moving up to higher levels of responsibility and recognition are part of your plan. Ask your manager if he/she sees that, too. Have you actively pursued promotion within your company or have you been expecting that it would come to you?

Keeping your head down and doing a good job will likely lead to raises and perhaps bonuses, but you need to do more to be promoted. Are you looking for and taking advantage of all opportunities to showcase your strengths and how you can help build value for the company? Are you getting the opportunity to improve your weaknesses and to enhance your skills and experience? If the answer to these last two questions is no, then you might be in the wrong department, at the wrong company, or maybe in the wrong industry for you. (Yes, your career ladder could possibly be up against the wrong building!) Or you may have a perception problem.

Do you know how others (particularly your manager and those at least one level

Ask a Tech Comm Manager is an advice column geared toward answering all those questions you have, but might be uncomfortable asking. We glean the questions from social media, forums, and most importantly, from you, dear reader. If we don't know an answer, we will interview experts and get information for you. Send us your questions to *kitbh.stc@gmail.com* or tweet them to *@kitcomgenesis* or the hashtag *#askTCmgr*.

up) perceive you? This is critical. Perception is very important and is not always based on reality. It's important to understand how perceptions are formed and informed and to learn that you can manage and change people's perception of you. This is a marketing exercise that never ends. *You* are the product that you want people to *buy*. Perception is based on two things: what you can control (how you present yourself (the *real* you) – through dress, speech, and behavior, including social media presence) and what you can't control (the lens of the perceiver's prior experience with someone in your position or who even looks like you. This is the baggage of the beholder, and for goodness sake, don't pick it up!)

How do you know what perception exists about you? By getting direct feedback from co-workers, managers and leaders, family, and friends. If you are unsure, ask for feedback from fans and non-fans alike. Develop a good sense of how you are perceived and work on non-strength areas. A thorough self-assessment is key. Next, consider how you want others to describe you when you are not in the room? All major decisions about your career are made when you are not in the room—project assignments, promotions, compensation! Your manager's perception of you is likely the most influential in the company, but not always. Once you have some real data to work with, you can change the things you can control to help manage and change other people's perceptions of you.

Dear TC Manager:
What are the most important traits and skills for a technical communicator to have?

—Curious Young Professional

Dear Curious Young Professional:
Below are a list of traits and skills we recommend as the underpinning for good technical communication.

Traits:

- curiosity
- love of learning, fast learner
- flexibility and persistence
- ability to see both the big picture and the details
- positive attitude
- ability to make connections between disparate things and see how they fit together
- ability to rise above your personal worldview to understand how someone else might see a situation or product
- comfortable with technology
- self-starter
- proactive
- good interpersonal communication skills

Skills:

- writing/editing global-ready content
- project management
- understanding of structured authoring concepts and techniques
- time management
- basic understanding of usability/user experience
- basic understanding of design concepts
- research and analysis
- production
- audience analysis

Dear TC Manager:
I have a technical background and "fell" into technical communication several years ago. I'm now looking for a new job and am finding my lack of credentials to be holding me back. I don't really want to get another degree. What do you recommend?

—Looking for Credentials

Dear Looking for Credentials,
Check out professional certification through STC's Certified Technical Communicator Professional (CTCP) certification program! It's a three-tier program that designates successive levels of knowledge and mastery of technical principles and best practices.

The Foundation Certification focuses on knowledge of the field. To achieve the Certified Professional Technical Communicator Foundational designation, applicants demonstrate knowledge and understanding of best practices in technical communication by passing a test that covers the nine core disciplines. *Technical Communication Today*, 5th Edition, by Richard Johnson-Sheehan is the special edition for STC Foundation Certification and is the recommended study material. STC is offering the CPTC Foundation Exam Prep class as a two-day preconference workshop in National Harbor, MD, on 6–7 May 2017.

The Practitioner Certification will demonstrate mastery of applying best practices and leading others in their use. The achievement of the Certified Professional Technical Communicator Practitioner designation may consist of a written test and an evaluation of work product. The Expert Certification requirements will require a set of work products and expert interviews.

Depending upon your industry and area of expertise, other certifications may also be appropriate. STC members hold a variety of industry certifications, including Certified Scrum Manager (CSM), Project Management Professional (PMP), Certified Agile Practitioner (PMI-ACP), Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP).

Mark Your Calendar

Organization Events Across the Globe

F.Y.I. lists information about nonprofit ventures only. Please send information to *intercom@stc.org.*

1 16 Mar
The **Association of Teachers of Technical Writing** (ATTW) will celebrate its 20th anniversary at its 2017 annual conference, 15 May in Portland, OR, at the Doubletree by Hilton Portland.
ATTW
http://attw.org/conference

2 22-26 Mar
The **Association for Information Science and Technology** (ASIS&T) will host the annual Information Architecture (IA) Summit 22-26 March 2017 at the Hyatt Regency Vancouver in Vancouver, BC, Canada.
ASIS&T
http://www.iasummit.org/

3 26–28 Mar
The **Annual Spectrum STC Rochester Conference** will be held 26-28 March, 2017.
STC Rochester
http://stc-rochester.org/spectrum/
spectrum@stc-rochester.org

4 31 Mar– 1 Apr
The **Annual Conduit STC-Philadelphia Metro Chapter Mid-Atlantic TechComm Conference** will be held 31 March through 1 April in Philadelphia.
STC-PMC
http://www.stcpmc.org/conferences/conduit-2017

5 30 Apr–2 May
The **International Society for Performance Improvement** will hold it's 2017 Annual Conference at Le Centre Sheraton in Montreal, QC, Canada. U.S. residents will require a passport in order to travel to Canada.
http://www.ispiconference.com/

6 7–10 May
The **Society for Technical Communication** will host its 64th Annual Summit at the Gaylord National Resort, just outside Washington, DC. For more information, please contact:
STC
+1 (703) 522-4114
http://summit.stc.org

7 18-21 May
The **Association of Independent Information Professionals** (AIIP) will hold its 2017 Annual Conference, with a theme of "Resilience, Reinvention, Renewal: Pivoting for Success" at the Hampton Inn Convention Center in New Orleans, LA.
AIIP
http://www.aiip.org/Conference/
225-408-4400

8 15-17 June
The **American Society for Indexing**'s 2017 Annual ASI – Beacon by the Bay conference will be held at the Holiday Inn by the Bay Hotel and Convention Center in Portland, ME.
https://www.asindexing.org/conference-2017/
(480) 245-6750

* STC-related event

Off Hours with the Rough Drafts

BY VIQUI DILL | *STC Senior Member*

Musical technical communicators, this one is for you!

The Washington, DC–Baltimore (WDCB) Chapter invites you to a special event at the 2017 Summit: The Rough Drafts are back! As the host chapter for this year's STC technical communication conference, the WDCB Chapter wants you to join us at the party of the year, featuring STC's own rock band, the Rough Drafts.

The party will be on Tuesday, May 9th at 7:00 PM, immediately following the Honors Reception in the Cherry Blossom Ballroom at the Gaylord Hotel. The event is open to friends and family members who may be nearby while you are attending the Summit, so feel free to bring your travel buddies and friends.

The Rough Drafts are a rock band made up of technical communicators and friends who perform your favorite dance tunes, old and new. The band has performed at Summits throughout the years and has featured performers from all across the world.

This year's band will feature STC members Rich Maggiani on drums, Stephen Adler on guitar, Richard Hamilton on guitar, and Viqui Dill on bass. They will be joined by Keith Dill, Viqui's award-winning husband, on guitar and fiddle.

Rocking out with the Rough Drafts.

Photographer Rachel Houghton

The Rough Drafts performing at the 2012 Summit in Chicago.

Over the years, the Rough Drafts have featured the talents of many other talented technical communicators, including Tommy Barker, Robert Hershenow, Bruce Poropat, John Hedtke, Carolyn Klinger, and Tristan Bishop. Here's a list of the years and venues that have featured the band at STC Summits:

Nashville 2002
Dallas 2003
Baltimore 2004
Seattle 2005
Las Vegas 2006
Minneapolis 2007
Philadelphia 2008
Chicago 2012
Atlanta 2013
Washington, DC 2017

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As in past years, the band invites you to join them on stage to sing or play. Musicians who would like to join the Rough Drafts on stage are urged to contact Viqui Dill before the Summit. Don't be shy. We welcome you!

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Tom Johnson | **Technical Writer, Blogger at I'd Rather Be Writing**

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